

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Thornton Village Historic District

other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number Centered on Thornton and Glen Mills Roads

city or town Thornbury Twp.

not for publication N/A

state Pennsylvania

code PA county Delaware

code 045 zip code 19373

vicinity N/A

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this X nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property X meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide X locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official

Charles H. Donald
Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission

July 14, 2007

Date

State or Federal Agency or Tribal government

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria.
(See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

 entered in the National Register

 See continuation sheet.

 determined eligible for the National Register

 See continuation sheet.

 determined not eligible for the National Register

 removed from the National Register

 other (explain):

Signature of Keeper

Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

☒ private
☐ public-local
☐ public-State
☐ public-Federal

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

☐ building(s)
☒ district
☐ site
☐ structure
☐ object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>13</u>	<u>2</u>	buildings
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	sites
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	structures
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	Objects
<u>13</u>	<u>2</u>	Total

Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE: business

GOVERNMENT: Post Office

DOMESTIC: Single dwelling

AGRICULTURE: animal facility

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC: Single dwelling

GOVERNMENT: Post Office

COMMERCE: business

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

Colonial

Federal

Gothic Revival

Italianate

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

Foundation stone

walls stone

Clapboard

Roof asphalt

Other iron, slate

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "X" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- ☐ **A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☐ **B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☒ **C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ **D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

C. Architecture

Period of Significance

C. 1750—c. 1890

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

- ☐ **A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- ☐ **B** removed from its original location.
- ☐ **C** a birthplace or a grave.
- ☐ **D** a cemetery.
- ☐ **E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- ☐ **F** a commemorative property.
- ☐ **G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Significant Dates

1777, 1829

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect / Builder

Unknown

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS)

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- ☐ previously listed in the National Register
- ☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
- ☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey
- ☐ # _____
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary Location of Additional Data

- ☐ State Historic Preservation Office
- ☐ Other State agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☒ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☐ Other
- Name of repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property approximately 12 acres

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone Easting	Northing	Zone Easting	Northing
1	<u>18 454296</u>	<u>4417677</u>	3	<u>18 454811 4417669</u>
2	<u>18 454546</u>	<u>4417806</u>	4	<u>18 454648 4417577</u>

___ See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Robert J. Wise Jr., Principal

organization Wise Preservation Planning

date 8/30/2005

street & number Station Square 1, Suite 104, 37 North Valley Road telephone (610) 722-5818

city or town Paoli

state Pa.

zip code 19301

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name ___ (see continuation sheets)

street & number _____ telephone _____

city or town _____ state _____ zip code _____

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.). A federal agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB control number.

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to Keeper, National Register of Historic Places, 1849 "C" Street NW, Washington, DC 20240.

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Thornton Village Historic District
Name of property
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County and State

Description

The Thornton Village Historic District is the heart of a small crossroads village in Thornbury Township, Delaware County, Pa. Thornton is located in a semi rural/suburban area of the township approximately 17 miles west of center city Philadelphia and two miles southeast of West Chester. The district is a collection of mainly intact buildings located at the intersection of Glen Mills and Thornton Roads. The roads form a T-shape intersection with the majority of the resources fronting Glen Mills Road. Most resources were constructed between 1790 and 1855, although one building dates to c. 1750 and some outbuildings date to the 1890s. Hence, the period of significance begins c. 1750 (date of construction of the earliest existing building) and ends c. 1890 (date of construction of several outbuildings). The district consists of fifteen buildings, of which thirteen are contributing. Resource types include one commercial building, seven residences, a former blacksmith shop, a converted barn, three stables or carriage houses, and two frame sheds. The anchor of the district is the Yellow House, a mid-18th century building located at the intersection. Historic resources are constructed of local materials (stone and frame) and are mostly two-story buildings situated on village lots. The two noncontributing resources are a converted barn and a garage constructed after the end of the period of significance. Together, these resources constitute an intact rural village setting whose present day appearance makes evident the village during its period of significance.

The Thornton Village Historic District is located on relatively level terrain that slopes slightly to the south and west. Glen Mills Road runs roughly east to west and curves to the north at its intersection with Thornton Road. Thornton Road is the stem of the "T" intersection, south of Glen Mills Road. The historic district is centered around the intersection of these roads; it stretches 1,500 feet along Glen Mills Road and 400 feet along Thornton Road. The district is comprised of ten properties, totaling approximately 12 acres. These include two small lots, four narrow rectangular properties with historic resources on the road and space for minor agricultural activity (gardens, etc.) to the rear, and four larger properties with substantial road frontage on Glen Mills Road.

The district's residences constitute about half of the resources in the district. Six residences face onto Glen Mills Road, which has a slight bend in the center of the district. Two residences stand west of the intersection, one directly north, and three to the east. One residence at the intersection faces onto Thornton Road. The setback of the residences varies; the two easternmost residences and the two at the intersection

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were constructed approximately fifteen feet off the road while other residences are set back twenty feet from the road [See Photos 1 and 2]. The key building in the district, the Yellow House, is just ten feet off the road. Many of these resources have associated outbuildings, including three small stables/barns, set back from the road.

Though a small district, the close proximity of the resources to one another and the roads help create the district's rural village setting. Bypassed by major roads and new construction, Thornton has maintained its architectural integrity, which is augmented by the district's intact historic resources. Just steps from Glen Mills Road is the former blacksmith shop, the post office, and the district's older residences. A description of the district begins with the Yellow House, the district's most important resource, and proceeds roughly clockwise through the district.

Overview of the district's major historic resources

The earliest buildings in the district reflect common vernacular colonial building techniques. The Yellow House, the oldest building in the district, was constructed c. 1750 as a tavern or inn on the Great Road through Thornbury Township at its intersection with Thornton Road (then called Concord Road). The Yellow House was constructed as a wider version of the typical Penn Plan: a two-story, two-bay building with a back-to-back corner fireplace providing heat to the parlor and a kitchen hearth in the two rooms. The Isaac Pyle House (c. 1777) was a stone example of the Penn Plan, constructed almost due north of the Yellow House. Both the Yellow House and Isaac Pyle House were doubled later in the century.

In the Federal era, several new buildings were constructed in the northwest part of the district. The Caleb Hoopes House, a two-story, four-bay building, was constructed c. 1790 with a side-hall plan. As such, it appears that the Caleb Hoopes House was a substantial building for its day. A characteristic feature of the building was its intact pent roof. Joseph Moore constructed the Blacksmith House c. 1805 between the Caleb Hoopes House and the Isaac Pyle House. This two-story, four-bay building reflects what is sometimes called the 'Pennsylvania Farmhouse' variety of the hall and parlor plan, as it has two front doors opening into the two interior rooms. A similar plan was used much later when George Beebe constructed his house c. 1851, replacing a log cabin. The Beebe House appears to have been constructed to provide facilities for a general store on one side and housing on the other. This assumption is based upon the fact that the general store and post office had closed in the Yellow House and that historic maps

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soon after the construction of the Beebe House show the store and post office located there. Whether Beebe had this use in mind for the property when he constructed the house is not known.

In the mid-nineteenth century, two residences were constructed by William D. Pennell east of the Yellow House. (Note: Pennell may have also constructed the house between these two and the Yellow House, which was demolished in the late twentieth century.) Pennell purchased the Yellow House at a bankruptcy auction in 1845. He subdivided the larger tract of land, selling off one five-acre lot with the log house (where Beebe constructed the stone house) and the Yellow House on an six-acre parcel. Pennell had two houses constructed in the eastern part of the district, possibly by Beebe, who was a carpenter. These two buildings – one Italianate, one Greek Revival – were in place by 1851, when John McKenzie, a saddler, purchased the property. Later deeds refer to the property as having “two dwelling houses” until the two were subdivided in 1942.

Individual Historic Resources

The Yellow House [1, Photo 3] anchors the historic district. Located at 378 Glen Mills Road on the southeast corner of the crossroads, the Yellow House is a Colonial Style building which has served as a tavern, post office, general store, grocery, cloth manufacturing business, and hair salon. The building consists of a two-part main block (c. 1750) and a rear addition (c. 1830). The main block is a two-story, eight-bay building consisting of the core to the east and an end addition. The end-gabled roof is clad with asphalt shingles and has a central brick chimney. Its walls are clad with German siding painted yellow. Windows are primarily 6x6 double hung sash units, placed asymmetrically over the main elevation. The second floor has four windows; the first floor has doors in the odd-numbered bays and windows in the alternating bays. The window in the second bay, providing natural light to the post office, is a large six-paned unit. A one-story porch is a prominent feature of the main elevation; the shed-roofed element is clad with asphalt shingles and rests on a series of square columns with slightly decorative brackets. The floor of the porch on the east end is slightly higher than that on the west side, since the interior floor level of the two sections is slightly different. A simple railing connects the porch's columns. On the rear of the Yellow House is a one-story addition (c. 1930) with the same cladding as the main block. The setting of the Yellow House has been altered somewhat. A gravel parking area has been created on the space east of the building for patrons of the post office and the other commercial endeavors in the building. Small agricultural outbuildings were once located here. Widening of the road resulted in the removal of the gas pump north of the building. In

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addition, an unobtrusive handicap access ramp has been constructed on the north elevation.

The large stone barn [2 NC, Photo 13] historically associated with the Yellow House is the home of Pace One Inn and Restaurant. Alban W. Ingram, the Thornton postmaster, constructed the double decker barn c. 1835. Originally the barn was a large stone building with a forebay on the south elevation and a substantial ramp system on the north elevation, facing the Yellow House. A stall extension was installed c. 1900 along Thornton Road south of the barn. The barn was rehabilitated for commercial purposes in the 1970s, then converted c. 1985 both on the interior and exterior to accommodate the current restaurant and inn use. The core is oriented perpendicular to Thornton Road, parallel to the Yellow House. It has four dormers on the south slope of its end-gabled roof (main elevation). The dormers (c. 1985) have 20-pane windows, similar to those on the buildings' walls. Much of the barn's walls are obscured by additions. On the main (south) elevation, a two-story cross-gabled section aligned with the west end wall has a one-story section extending across the south elevation of the core. Another two-story addition is located off the east end of the core; this stucco-clad section maintains the roofline of the core but is stepped back from its main elevation. The north elevation of the barn has two cross-gabled additions (c. 1985) in the location of the former outsheds. The three-story additions are clad with stucco on the lower two floors and board and batten above. Though noncontributing, the barn is included in the district due to its proximity to the Yellow House and its association with that significant building.

The vernacular George Beebe / Amos Sharpless House [3, Photo 7], located at 346 Thornton Road on the southwest corner of the intersection, is the only building in the district oriented to Thornton Road rather than Glen Mills Road. It consists of a Late Federal Style core (c. 1851) with an end addition and a rear ell addition (both c. 1900). The core is a two-story, four-bay building. The end-gabled roof is clad with asphalt shingles and features flush brick end chimneys. The stone walls are clad with stucco. Fenestration is symmetrical on the main elevation, with four bays of wall openings on two levels. Windows are 6x6 units on the second floor and 6x9 on the first floor; those in the first and fourth bays have shutters. Doors are located in the second and third bays and open onto a shed-roofed porch resting on two square columns with slightly decorative gingerbread brackets. The end addition to the south is a two-story, one-bay element clad with aluminum siding. It has a hipped roof, paired windows on the south wall, and single 2x2 units on the east and west walls. The rear ell is a two-story, cross-gabled element with small shed-roofed sections off the south and west elevations. It has machine shingled walls with 6x6 windows and a diamond paned window on the north

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elevation.

A small frame shed [4] associated with the George Beebe House is located to its south. The roof of the c. 1890 building has an off-centered ridge and is clad with asphalt shingles. The main elevation has board and batten siding and large bay doors. The side walls are clad with German siding. Windows are one-by-one sliding units.

The Caleb Hoopes House [5, Photo 5] is a c. 1790 Colonial Style building at the west end of the district (381 Glen Mills Road). It consists of a two-story, four-bay core with a rear ell addition. The core has an end-gabled roof clad with standing seam tin and featuring a brick chimney at each end of the ridge. The stucco over stone walls are scored on the west end wall. Windows are 6x6 double hung units on the second floor, 6x9 on the first floor, and smaller 2-light attic windows; first floor windows have mid-nineteenth century shutters. One of the defining features of the main elevation is the pent roof, which extends along the entire main (south) elevation and is clad with wood shingles; it appears to be original. The main entrance is located in the eastern bay, rather than in the center bay. The door has nine window panes above four panels. The rear ell addition is a two-story element with a highly pitched roof and two dormers on each roof slope. Other features of the ell include 2x2 windows, aluminum siding, and porches on both sides.

The stable/carriage house [6, Photo 10] associated with the Caleb Hoopes House is located northeast of the house. It is a four-part frame building consisting of a c. 1890 core to the east with progressively smaller sections telescoping laterally to the west. The core is a two-story, four-bay section clad with wood shingles and board and batten. Windows are 6x6 double hung, and a hinged door is located in the third bay under a small hood. The first addition is an end-gabled element with a lower roofline than the core. It is clad with wood shingles and board and batten. Two sets of paired doors open to reveal the interior bays. The second addition is a narrow one-bay section. Its end-gabled roof is clad with wood shingles, and its walls are board and batten. A two-by-two sliding window spans almost the entire width of the section. The fourth section, on the west end, has a tin roof, board and batten siding, and a concrete block foundation.

The Jesse Parry House [7, Photo 14] is a c. 1830 Federal Style residence located northwest of the Thornton intersection facing south onto Glen Mills Road (379 Glen Mills Road). The two-story, four-bay main block has a late nineteenth century rear ell addition flanked by small, early twentieth century side additions. The main block has an end-gabled roof clad with asphalt shingles and featuring a brick chimney at the west end of

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the ridge. The walls of the frame house are clad with clapboards. Fenestration is symmetrical, with four bays of wall openings on the first and second floors. Windows are 6x6 double hung units with lip lintels and sills. Doors are located in the second and third bays of the first floor, main (south) elevation. They are protected by a hipped-roof porch with turned columns at the corners; the columns are attached to newel posts on the wall by a balustrade with turned balusters. The main block has a stucco over stone foundation with 6-light and 6x6 basement windows. The two-story rear ell has a slightly higher roofline than the core. It is clad with asphalt shingles on its roof and German siding. An addition off the west elevation of the ell is a one-story section with a flat roof and German siding. A screened porch is located on the east elevation of the ell. Northwest of the house is a stone barn ruin.

The Blacksmith House / Joseph Moore House [9, Photo 2, center] is a c. 1805 vernacular building at 377 Glen Mills Road, facing south. It consists of a two-story, three-bay core with an end addition. The core has an end-gabled roof clad with wood shingles and featuring a brick chimney at each end of the ridge. The walls are stucco over stone. Fenestration is symmetrical, with 6x6 windows on the side walls. The door, located in the center bay, is located slightly off-center. A two-story, two-bay addition on the east end has a lower roofline than the core and an off-centered ridge. The addition dates to the late nineteenth century. Its end-gabled roof is clad with wood shingles, and its walls are clad with clapboards. The upper floor has a single 6x6 window on the main elevation and a larger window on the end wall. The ground floor has a paneled door in the first bay and a window in the second bay. All windows are small units with wide frames dating to the late nineteenth century.

A small one-story stable/carriage house [10, Photo 12] is associated with the Blacksmith House. Constructed in the late nineteenth century, the building is located northwest of the Blacksmith House. It has an end-gabled roof clad with tin and board and batten walls. A large sliding door on the south side and a smaller hinged door on the west end provide access into the interior.

The Blacksmith Shop [11, Photo 6] is located immediately north of the Yellow House at 375 Glen Mills Road. The blacksmith shop is composed of a c. 1805 core which was extended south nearly to the road (late nineteenth century), with an early twentieth century wing off the west end. The main block is a two-story end-gabled building. Its roof is clad with wood shingles and features exposed rafter tails. Its walls are stone on the first floor and wood shingles on the second floor. Fenestration is roughly symmetrical, with four bays of wall openings on the second floor and three on the first –

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the eastern two bays on the second floor are aligned with a sliding door on the first. Windows are 6x6 double hung units, including a tripled window on the east gable. The first floor features a 6x6 window, a door, and a set of double doors opening into the interior. The one-story addition on the west end wall of the main block features a wood shingled roof, exposed rafter tails, a brick chimney on its west wall, board and batten walls, and frame construction.

The Isaac Pyle House [12, Photo 4, right] is a two-story stone Colonial Style residence (c. 1777) located at 373 Glen Mills Road, just northeast of the Yellow House. It consists of a two-part main block facing south and two rear additions and a one-story front porch. The main block is a two-part building consisting of a two-story, three-bay core (c. 1777) and a two-bay stone end addition (1784). The main block has a tin roof and brick chimneys on each end of the core. The east end wall has a pent eave. The east end wall of the addition has been stuccoed while other walls retain their exposed stone construction. Windows are 2x2 double hung units (replacement). Two doors on the south elevation open into both sections of the main block. A one-story porch dominates the south elevation of the house; it has a shed roof resting on spindle-like columns. A two-story ell addition and smaller one-story section are located on the rear of the main block and are not visible from Glen Mills Road. The main ell section (constructed in the nineteenth century) is a stucco over stone addition aligned flush with the east end wall of the main block. It has 2x2 windows, a shed roof, and a brick corner chimney. The smaller rear section is a frame section with a shed roof, aluminum siding, and large 8x8 windows. This section dates to the mid-twentieth century.

Associated with the Isaac Pyle House is a nearby small stable/carriage house [13, Photo 11] currently being converted into office space. The c. 1890 building is situated northeast of the house and faces southeast to Glen Mills Road. The two-story, two-bay building has an asphalt-shingled roof and board and batten siding. The fenestration varies widely, including six-pane casements, large two-by-two sliding windows, and two-over-two windows. The first floor façade has two large bays: the western bay has a large double door while the eastern bay has been sealed and now has a Chicago window. A one-story shed-roofed addition on the rear of the carriage house also has board and batten siding. The building now houses a business but remains relatively intact, with the biggest changes being replacement windows and the framing in of the open bays facing Glen Mills Road.

The Italianate Style William D. Pennell House [14, Photo 8] is located at 368 Glen Mills Road, along the east border of the historic district. The c. 1850 Italianate Style

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main block with a rear addition. The main block has a nearly flat, hipped roof with stucco-clad chimneys on the east and west walls, typical of the Italianate Style. A thick molded cornice with decorative brackets supports the eaves. The walls are clad with German siding. The house has a symmetrical fenestration, consisting of three bays of wall openings on three levels on the main elevation. All windows and doors have a slightly pointed lintel and a wide frame. Windows are 2x2 units with smaller 3x3 friezeband windows on the third floor. The door on the main elevation opens under a hipped roof porch. A rear addition, not visible from Glen Mills Road, has a shed roof and a small porch.

The garage [15, Photo 15] associated with the Italianate William D. Pennell House is a one-story frame building facing east toward the Italianate house. The c. 1910 building has a large door on rollers on its front gable end. The cladding of this shed is partially board and batten and partially German siding. It has two large 6x6 windows on the north elevation and overhanging eaves on the gable ends. The building has a block foundation. Although this is an intact and early garage, the building was constructed after the end of the period of significance and is identified as noncontributing.

The Gothic Revival Style William D. Pennell House [8, Photo 9] is located at 370 Glen Mills Road, near the east border of the historic district. Constructed c. 1850, the house has a prominent cross-gabled core, front porch, and rear addition. The core is a two-and-a-half story, three-bay building with aluminum siding and an asphalt-clad roof. A single brick chimney is located near the intersection of the cross-gable and the ridge. Inside the gables is an area of decorative shingle work, partially diamond-shaped and partially fishscale. Windows are four-over-four double hung sash with shutters. The door is located in the center bay, recessed behind a storm door. It is protected by a one-story, full-length front-porch with a hipped roof and a series of square columns connected by a simple balustrade. The two-story rear addition shares the roofing material and cladding of the core but has smaller windows. A smaller one-story section off the rear of the larger addition has an open porch on each side and is secluded from the road. The rear addition is not visible from Glen Mills Road due to mature trees.

Integrity

The Thornton Village Historic District retains a high degree of architectural integrity. Its layout of primary buildings facing the two roads, with outbuildings in the rear of lots, remains intact. One historic resource has been demolished – a c. 1855 residence east of the Yellow House – in addition to some small agricultural outbuildings associated with the Alban W. Ingram Barn (Pace One). Alterations to the historic resources have been

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the Alban W. Ingram Barn (Pace One). Alterations to the historic resources have been mostly located on the rear of the buildings and are in many cases are not visible from the road. Much of the area surrounding the village, some of which consists of newer housing, is buffered from the district by mature vegetation. Resources within the district make evident their period of initial construction, including one of the two noncontributing buildings. The integrity of the Alban W. Ingram Barn and its early additions has been compromised by its conversion into restaurant and inn facilities, yet its massive stone walls remain intact, indicating the original size and texture of the barn.

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Statement of Significance

The Thornton Village Historic District is significant under Criterion C for architecture in the context of a late-18th to late 19th century rural village. Situated at an intersection of two old and locally important roads, Thornton traces its roots to c. 1750 when the "Yellow House," an inn and tavern, opened for business at the intersection. The Yellow House, which for a time was the moniker of the village, later contained a general store and post office. The post office, opened in 1829, continues to operate in the Yellow House. It is one of the oldest post offices in its original location (if not the oldest) in the United States. The small village – later named Thornton, grew up around the Yellow House. Other buildings served as stores and a black smith shop; the availability of resident tradesmen provided goods and services to the surrounding agricultural community. Architecturally, the historic resources in Thornton reflect various architectural traditions at the time of their construction. These resources exhibit a blending of the prevailing styles as well as rural building traditions found in Chester County (and, after 1789 when the counties split, western Delaware County). Although the period of significance begins c.1750 with the construction of the Yellow House and ends c. 1890, with the construction of a few small stable buildings, the district as a whole has undergone few major changes since the last village residence –the George Beebe House - was built in 1851. This residence and the district's other resources are built around the Thornton/Glen Mills Road intersection, in a pattern that typifies a small, rural village, both developing and serving the larger community, throughout much of its period of significance.

Early History

Thornton is located in the western portion of Thornbury Township, which was established in 1687 when six English families settled there. George and Ann Pearce, among the earliest settlers, purchased large tracts of land in western Thornbury Township, including the northeastern quarter of the historic district. The Pearce family moved to Pennsylvania from Thornbury in Gloucestershire, England, and historians generally assume they provided the Township's name.¹ Pearce was a leading figure in Thornbury Township. He served on a committee to lay out Thornbury Road (forming part of the roadbed of Glen Mills Road) in 1688-89 and served in the Colonial Assembly

¹ George Smith, *History of Delaware County, Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia: Henry B. Ashmead, 1862), p. 401; Henry B. Ashmead, *History of Delaware County, Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia: L.H. Everts & Co., 1884), p. 702.

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in 1706. The western portion of Glen Mills Road, running through the Thornton Village Historic District, was laid out along the border of large tracts of land owned by George Pearce and Joseph Edwards, continuing west through a large tract owned by Edward Brown. The T-shaped intersection was created in the 1690s when Thornton Road (originally called Concord Road) was laid out along the line between John Kingsman's land and Robert Pyle's land in the 1690s. By 1700, the current road system in the district was in place although none of the current historic resources existed.

The history of properties in the district in the early eighteenth century is obscured by the absence of deeds. Patents indicate that the land on the southwest corner of the intersection was owned by John Pyle after 1712. William Pyle (possibly his brother) owned 225 acres of land north of his property. Joseph Edwards filed a patent for the land on the southeast corner of the intersection in 1703. At some time, the owner of the northeast quarter, George Pearce, also became the owner of the southeast quarter. As such, the Pearce family owned much of the historic district throughout the eighteenth century. Caleb Pearce, possibly the son of George, sold his land to his son Caleb Pearce Jr. in 1758. Caleb Pearce Jr. owned 290 acres of land (according to township tax records), of which he sold 68 acres to his son Joseph Pearce in 1793. In the very early decades of the eighteenth century, then, the intersection in the historic district was the place where corners of four farms met. There is no evidence of any historic resources being constructed in the district until the 1750s.

Thornton grew up around the Yellow House [1], the building on the southeast corner of the intersection. In fact, the building was so important that the village itself was called Yellow House for many years; as late as 1885 a deed stated that the property being sold was located in "Thornton, formerly called Yellow House."² The date of construction of the building is not certain but took place by 1755. At the time, the Yellow House was part of the larger farm southeast of the historic district (currently the Clinger Farm), so it is difficult to determine on documents from that time exactly which building on the larger farm might be the Yellow House. It was originally an extended example of the Penn Plan house: a two-story, two-bay frame building with two rooms on each floor. The first floor originally featured a back-to-back corner fireplace as commonly found in rural Chester (later Delaware) County. Some of the faded yellow exterior paint of the original

² Delaware County Deed Book W5 page 305. This was a deed for land on the north side of Glen Mills Road, not for the Yellow House itself.

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section is said to remain in the attic, protected by the later west addition. During renovations in 1928, three old wooden drawers were discovered in the attic of the original section. Janice (Hunter) Valentine, who witnessed the discovery and looked through the contents, described them as "a dozen or so identical sets of early pressed glass sugars and creamers and similar pairs of salt and pepper shakers. There were stacks of worn pewter plates. A dozen or so identical earthenware pitchers."³ Valentine also reported that old and badly preserved papers found with these items included ledger entries from the 1750s reading "Night's lodging," "three horses," etc. However, the ledgers were in very poor condition and do not survive. These finds appear to verify a local story that the Yellow House was originally constructed as a tavern at the intersection.

One of the clients of the Yellow House "Inn" was George Gray, owner of Gray's Ferry over the Schuylkill River. Throughout the eighteenth century, the Pearce family owned the Yellow House, not Gray, as is commonly reported in secondary sources. As the American Revolution proceeded, Gray decided to move his family away from Philadelphia to escape the impending British occupation. Some secondary sources report that Gray had been using the Yellow House as a summer residence to escape the Philadelphia summers before the Revolution.

Gray's attempt to escape a potential attack by the British backfired. During the Battle of the Brandywine on 9/11/1777, Gray's family at the Yellow House heard the cannon booming during the battle. Fleeing American troops ran down the Great Road, past the Yellow House, where Gray's daughter Margaret watched them fleeing. The village became known as "Shintown" during the late eighteenth century due to the way the fleeing Patriots "barked their shins" as they ran with their heavy equipment down the road. Gray's wife began to treat wounded soldiers in the Yellow House, and later a group of Virginia soldiers signed a note of appreciation for her efforts. (The tradition that the "Gray Ladies" nurse association originated with the events at the Yellow House was recently shown not to be accurate.)

Around the time of the Battle of the Brandywine, Isaac Pyle constructed a stone house on the north side of the road opposite the Yellow House. This house [12] was later enlarged to its current two-story, four-bay appearance. The first signs of the incipient

³ Janice (Hunter) Valentine, "Thornton General Store," manuscript reminiscences, dated 1980.

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village were coming into focus with the Isaac Pyle House and the Yellow House facing each other near the intersection of two old roads. A log house was constructed in the nineteenth century on the site of the later George Beebe House [3] which assisted in fostering the emergence of the village. (Township tax records attest to this house on a parcel of five acres of land.) The Caleb Hoopes House [5] was constructed on the west end of the village in the very late eighteenth century.

After the Revolution, Thornbury Township experienced a period of economic prosperity. Industry boomed in the eastern part of the township, as forges, slitting mills, nail factories, saw mills, and iron works emerged. These changes were taking place two miles east of the district. Around 1800, Thomas Charlton set up a hand loom in the Yellow House for the production of linens. Since the Yellow House was enlarged during this time, it seems likely that Charlton was responsible. He is reported to have produced "cloths, coverlets, linens, sheetings, towels, and linsey" in the Yellow House. It is not clear exactly when Charlton worked in the Yellow House since the Pearce family continued to own it but live elsewhere. Across Glen Mills Road from the Yellow House, Joseph Moore opened a store and blacksmith shop. The store appears to have been located in a part of his house [9]. When Moore purchased 10 acres of land from Joseph Pearce in 1799, it was described as "two lots of land." By 1802, township tax records note that Moore was a shopkeeper operating a smithy. In 1807, he sold the property to John King (later storekeeper in the Yellow House), but Moore continued to lease the space from King for the store. The 1808 Township tax records he is describe Moore as a storekeeper paying the tax on the same property. Emmor Venon purchased the property in 1810, and he maintained the smithy. The store disappears from the deed and tax records, but the smithy operated until well into the twentieth century.

In the first few decades of the nineteenth century, the Yellow House village reflected a typical rural community. Five houses clustered around the intersection formed a tight village atmosphere. The village layout was enhanced in 1828 when the local blacksmith, Jesse Parry, purchased a vacant 53-perch parcel of land in the district and constructed a house for himself [7]. Each parcel of land included outlying farm land used by the residents to supplement their income, a typical rural village layout found in similar villages such as Kemblesville (DOE 2002), Chester County.

A second general store (replacing Joseph Moore's earlier store, already discontinued) opened in the Yellow House in the 1820s. John King, a yeoman farmer who owned

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several parcels of land in the district, purchased half of the John Pearce estate in 1823, including the current Clinger farmstead and the Yellow House. No evidence of a store appears in township tax records during Pearce's ownership. However, a portion of a ledger maintained by Robert McCall, the first storekeeper, details the patrons and their credit purchases at "Thornton Store" from 1826 until 1832. It is unclear why McCall used this name for the Yellow House, although township tax records indicate that members of the Thornton family lived in the Township.

John King established the Thornton Post Office in the Yellow House in 1829. The exact date of the establishment of the post office has been reported differently in various secondary sources, but an article in the *Chester Times* in 1949 appears to have been based on actual post office documents and states that the post office opened on 2/25/1829. The Thornton Post Office is thought to be the oldest post office in the United States located in its original building. It was one of the first Delaware County post offices not located on a post road. The nearest post office was at Concordville, two miles away. At the time, operating a post office was a rather lucrative opportunity which assisted in the profitability of general stores. King served as the post master from 1829 until 1832. One of the more important mid-nineteenth century post masters was Alban W. Ingram, who served from 1834 until 1846. Ingram was involved in the establishment of a new mail route called the Village Green Route. This was a weekly delivery of mail and newspapers from Chester City to Village Green, then Ivy Mills, Thornton, Concord Meeting House P.O., Pleasant Hill (Elam), and Marcus Hook. Ingram also appears to have constructed the extant double decker barn [2], replacing the earlier log barn mentioned in the township tax records. Ingram went bankrupt in 1844 and the property was sold at a sheriff's auction.

Ingram's bankruptcy was an important event in the history of Thornton. First, the 73-acre farm associated with the Yellow House was partitioned. William D. Pennell, a merchant, purchased the portions of the larger property located in the historic district, including the Yellow House and barn. Pennell constructed two houses on the south side of the road [14 and 8] and sold them on a single parcel of land to John McKenzie, a saddler, in 1851. This construction further enhanced the village setting of the district; the new parcel of land contained two stylish residences along Glen Mills Road with open space to the south, similar to other lots in the village. By that time, the village was called Thorntonville, one of the earliest instances of that name for the Yellow House community. (The name 'Thorntonville' is found in mid-nineteenth century maps and

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deeds, giving way to 'Thornton' after the Civil War.) McKenzie was one of the first tradesmen living on village lots in Thornton.

The Second impact from the bankruptcy was that Pennell sold the Yellow House on a parcel of six acres to Charles Zimmer. The store in the Yellow House closed, and the post office moved to the Isaac Pyle House [12] and then to the George Beebe House [3]. The post office closed completely from 1857 until 1861. Third, Pennell sold a three-acre lot on the southwest corner of Thorntonville to George Beebe, a carpenter. This lot had contained a log house which John King purchased from the Pyle family in 1829. Beebe demolished the log house and constructed the stone house [3] which stands today. When he sold the property to George Drayton in 1864, the value of the property increased from \$725 in the deed of 1851 to \$1,525. Amos Sharpless purchased the property in 1865 and opened a store there. The construction of a 'double house' provided an ideal location for a village store, as the family could live on one side and operate the store on the other side. A map dated 1875 verifies that the post office was located in this store.

The Thornton Post Office moved back into the Yellow House in 1878 and has been there since. Bennett Temple re-opened the Thornton Store and re-established the post office there. His successor, William H. Yearsley, made a sign for the post office / store which hung in front of the building and is now stored in the attic. Succeeding storekeeper/post masters were Howard L. Yearsley, Charles H. Way, Joseph W. Mewes, and George Hunter. One event assisting the success of the store was a wave of new construction west of the district. The Methodist Church was constructed in 1846 (later rebuilt), and additional buildings were constructed west of the district. These residences were served by the Thornton Store and Post Office (Yellow House).

Two trends in the history of Thornton assisted in preserving its historic character. First, since it was not located along a main road, little additional development took place after 1860. Second, since Thornton was bypassed by railroads, the economic changes occurring in other railroad communities did not materialize in Thornton. The village remained a small commercial center for west Thornbury Township, with tradesmen operating out of houses and workshops near the Yellow House. *Boyd's Directory of Delaware County* reported in 1897 that Thornton offered the following businesses or tradesmen: six carpenters, four masons, two painters, two blacksmiths, and one dressmaker, physician, bricklayer, shoe maker, paper hanger, auctioneer, and general

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store/post office (at the Yellow House – where agricultural implements were also sold). Several of these tradesmen are known to have lived in the historic district: T.K. Darlington (carpenter) in the Jesse Parry House, W.C. Hendrick (blacksmith) and his wife Ida Hendrick (dressmaker) in the Joseph Moore House, Herbert Roberts (paper hanger) in the William D. Pennell House, and H.L. Yearsley (general store and postmaster) in the Yellow House. Thornton today retains much of its appearance of the late nineteenth century, as no further buildings were constructed in the district and only one was demolished: the S. Pusey House just west of the Yellow House.

George Hunter served as postmaster and storekeeper for three decades in the early twentieth century (1923-1955). Hunter purchased the Yellow House property after the preceding post master hanged himself in the barn. The Hunters renovated the entire building, upgrading the store facilities and adding the addition on the south elevation. According to his daughter's account (Janice Valentine, op. cit.), the general store became highly profitable and remained a center of the community. Local baseball games were organized there and played in an adjacent field. When Hunter retired, he had served the longest continuous term as post master in the county's history.

Thornton remained a small commercial village through the twentieth century. The blacksmith shop was locally known for its high-quality decorative ironwork, now collected by residents. In 1960, the blacksmith shop closed. In 1962, Ted Stinson, the postmaster/storekeeper, divided the post office from the grocery and leased out both to others. Butchers in the Work family kept the grocery store open until 1980. Stinson renovated the Alban W. Ingram Barn [2]. A hair salon operated there in the 1970s, but beginning in 1978 Pace One Restaurant has been located there. Pace One, located on the same tax parcel as the Yellow House, was greatly altered in the following years to provide additional lodging and restaurant facilities. When the grocery store in the Yellow House closed in 1980, a furniture store named the Wooden Knob took its place for thirteen years. A hair salon is located there today.

Thornton continues to convey the setting of a rural nineteenth century village. Its oldest building, the Yellow House, was the first of several commercial endeavors during the period of significance. It began as a tavern or inn along one of the earliest roads laid out in Thornbury Township. After the Revolution, when the inn failed, a cloth making business was established there, which flourished c. 1800. With the absence of a village general store, one opened on the north side of the road, associated with a blacksmith

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and wheelwright shop. Although this general store was fleeting, the blacksmith shop remained in operation for 160 years. With the advent of the 19th century, Thornton became a local center for commerce. A post office and general store was established in the Yellow House. Thornton thus became a typical rural village where farmers could come to pick up their mail and visit typical businesses of the day, including the blacksmith, wheelwright, saddler, cobbler, and masons. Day laborers living in the village offered there services as well: there were painters, carpenters, an auctioneer, and a wall paper hanger. Though business has changed over the years, the post office survives and a few other modern businesses occupy buildings in Thornton, thus maintaining its historic significance and setting.

Architectural Significance

The architectural fabric and layout of Thornton village was mostly constructed during the century c. 1750 to c. 1850. It is quite remarkable that a village in Philadelphia's western suburbs was so little altered in the twentieth century.

The architectural significance of Thornton is based upon three major features. First, the village was a tight collection of historic resources around an intersection. The historic resources were surrounded by open space until well into the twentieth century, when the first of these outlying parcels was developed. Second, most historic resources were constructed on narrow village lots, with the house or workshop located near the road and open space extending away from the intersection. As the larger parcels were subdivided, new village lots were created following the same pattern. Third, the architecture of the resources reflects typical village construction found in Delaware and Chester County of the early nineteenth century. Most resources are two-story buildings, either stone or frame, facing Glen Mills Road. The largest resource is the Yellow House, around which the village grew. Residences in the district have a similar scale, orientation, and setback, and many have smaller outbuildings in the rear of the lots. In turn, these resources reflect both the prevailing architectural styles as well as local building traditions found in rural village settings. The intact setting and individual resources in the historic district make evident this significance and historic appearance.

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Comparative Analysis

Thornton is an example of a small preserved village in Philadelphia's western suburbs. Lack of major transportation systems in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries reduced its economic growth but also helped to preserve its village character.

A historic district very similar to Thornton Village is White Horse (Willistown Township, Chester County, listed 2001). Located four miles northeast of Thornton, White Horse had a large general store across the road from a blacksmith shop. The residences, mainly stone, were constructed near this small commercial core. The two villages occupy roughly the same amount of land (1,200 feet latitudinally and 400 feet longitudinally), although the White Horse Historic District is larger due to farm fields included in its boundary. Historic resources at White Horse were primarily constructed between 1798 and 1850, much the same time that most buildings were constructed at Thornton. Both villages provide excellent examples of Federal Style architecture. One difference between the two districts is that many buildings at White Horse are larger and reflect the greater wealth of the area compared to Thornton. White Horse's primary buildings are three-stories tall, with friezeband windows lighting the third floor (called at the time the 'attic'), whereas in Thornton the buildings were only two stories tall.

Another such village is the Waterloo Mills Historic District (NR 1995) in nearby Easttown Township, Chester County. Waterloo Mills, unlike Thornton, did not emerge at a cross roads. It did contain a cluster of buildings centered on one building of primary historic significance - Waterloo Mill. It also contained a number of houses with space for limited agricultural use, although some of these residences were used by the workers at the mill rather than local tradesmen. At Kemblesville Historic District, Franklin Township, Chester County (DOE 2002), the historic district also grew up around a T-intersection of one major route and a lesser used road. Kemblesville had similar village lots to Thornton and an early post office. Neither village featured religious or educational facilities in the center of the village. Kemblesville was about twice the size of Thornton, with substantially more residences. Another similarity among these historic districts is that most commercial properties were converted into residences; otherwise, the integrity of the districts would suffer from more late-twentieth century commercial alterations.

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Verbal Boundary Description

Beginning at a point on the north side of Glen Mills Road, the southwest corner of tax parcel 44-28-61, the boundary runs northwest 335 feet, then turns along the north boundary of parcel 44-28-61 and 44-28-62 and runs northeast 744 feet to a point on the west side of tax parcel 44-28-63. The boundary turns northwest along the west boundary of 44-28-63, running 173 feet before turning northeast for 86 feet, then runs southeast 1892 feet along the east border of tax parcel 44-28-63 to the northwest corner of parcel 44-28-65. The boundary runs along the north and east sides of parcel 44-28-65: 297 feet northeast along the north side and 159 feet along the east side. From there, the boundary crosses Glen Mills Road to a point on the north side of tax parcel 44-28-92. The boundary runs 206 feet northeast along the north border of tax parcels 44-28-92, 44-28-91, and 44-28-90. At this point, the boundary turns southeast and runs 404 feet along the east side of tax parcels 44-28-90 and 44-28-91 to a point on the east boundary of the latter tax parcel. The boundary runs southwest from that point, cutting across tax parcels 44-28-91 and 44-28-92, 310 feet to the southeast point of tax parcel 44-28-93. From there, the boundary runs 300 feet southwest along the south border of tax parcel 44-28-93 to a point on the east side of Thornton Road and runs northwest along the east edge of the road 232 feet. The boundary turns southwest and continues in a straight line along the south boundary of tax parcel 44-28-107, 223 feet to the southwest corner of the parcel and then northeast along the west border (crossing Glen Mills Road) 314 feet to a point on the south side of tax parcel 44-28-61. The boundary runs along the south border of the last mentioned tax parcel these two courses to the point of beginning: southwest 215 feet and southwest 365 feet.

Boundary Justification

The Thornton Village Historic District includes the historic core of the village, which remains much as it appeared in the late nineteenth century. All intact historic resources contributing to the period of significance were included in the district. Of the adjacent properties, only one has a historic resource, a highly altered Bungalow immediately east of the district on the south side of Glen Mills Road. (The building, though greater than 50 years of age, was constructed after Thornton's period of significance and is highly altered.) The boundary line severed parcels 91 and 92 to eliminate the southern portion of each parcel, each containing a noncontributing building. Scattered historic resources along Glen Mills Road east and west of the district were not included in the district because they are visually separated by open fields and infill (otherwise noncontributing) development.

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Note: Historic and current maps are shown on the following pages. The heavy arrows on the maps point due north, usually to the Thornton intersection. They are added onto maps which are not oriented to the north.

- Map 1. Detail of West Chester U.S.G.S. Quad Map (1997).
- Map 2. Sketch Map, Thornton Village Historic District.
- Map 3. Detail of Benjamin Smith's Atlas of Delaware County, Pennsylvania, showing the patents in Thornbury Township. This map was produced in 1880 using the original patents. Note that both Glen Mills and Thornton Roads are already indicted on patents of the early eighteenth century.
- Map 4. Detail of G. M. Hopkins, Atlas of Delaware County (1870), showing the Thorntonville vicinity. Arrow points north.
- Map 5. Detail of the Everts & Stewart Map of 1875, showing the Thornton vicinity.
- Map 6. Detail of the E.W. Smith Atlas (1892), showing the Thornton vicinity.
- Map 7. Tax map, Thornton Village Historic District.